

Why Pride Causes Me Problems, Part 6 - 1 Corinthians 4:18-21 – October 12th, 2014

- Today's teaching will be part six of a series I've titled, "Why Pride Causes Me Problems."
- While we will finish the chapter, we will not be finished with Paul's rebukes directed at these proud and arrogant Christians there in Corinth.
- Here in our text, we find the eighth problem that our pride causes, and it's that of inviting a harsh rebuke, as we'll now see in verses 18-21.

8. Pride invites a harsh rebuke (Verses 18-21)

(18) Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you. (19) But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have. (20) For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. (21) What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a whip, or in love and with a gentle spirit?

- v18-19 He says they've become arrogant thinking he won't come but he will come very soon to find out who, and how powerless, they are.
- v20-21 He then says God's kingdom isn't a matter of talk but power. He then asks if they prefer he come with a whip or with a gentle spirit.
- Before we get into these verses here at the end of chapter four, I think we would do well to understand why it is Paul is sounding so harsh.

- While I realize he rhetorically asks them if they want him to come gently or with a whip it seems he's found them out and is calling them out.
- For Paul to tell them they've become arrogant thinking he wouldn't come and call them on it is nothing shy of a direct threat to the contrary.
- Be that as it may, the question remains; why is Paul being so harsh and threatening in confronting the Corinthian Christians in his rhetoric?

- I would suggest the answer is twofold; first, he's preparing the way for an even harsher rebuke in chapter 5 dealing with incest of all things.

1 Corinthians 5:1-2 (NIV) 1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father's wife. 2 And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have gone into mourning and have put out of your fellowship the man who has been doing this?

- Secondly, here in chapter 4, it's because their arrogance and pride had risen to the level of warranting such a rebuke from Apostle himself.
- Often times God deems it necessary for us to be the recipient of such a rebuke by sending an Apostle Paul into our lives for our own good.
- When this happens, we're all prone to harden our hearts and stiffen our necks because we're so full of pride, and we do so to our own peril.

Proverbs 29:1 (NIV) 1 Whoever remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy.

- There's a textbook case of an arrogant fool named Nabal and his destruction in 1 Samuel 25, which we studied about two months ago now.
- When David's men approach Nabal's men concerning the custom of sharing the increase at the time of harvest, Nabal arrogantly refuses.
- David's response is to take his armed men and kill Nabal. When Nabal's men catch wind of it, instead of going to Nabal they go to his wife.

1 Samuel 25:14-17 (14) Now one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, "Look, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master; and he reviled them. (15) But the men *were* very good to us, and we were not hurt, nor did we miss anything as long as we accompanied them, when we were in the fields. (16) They were a wall to us both by night and day, all the time we were with them keeping the sheep. (17) Now therefore, know and consider what you will do, for harm is determined against our master and against all his household. For he *is such* a scoundrel that *one* cannot speak to him."

- I can't even begin to tell you how unthinkable this would have been in that culture in that day. A man never goes around another to his wife.
- Moreover, for him to tell Nabal's wife that the reason he's coming to her is because he is such a scoundrel that nobody can speak to him.
- The point being is that instead of listening, this rich proud fool, continues to stiffen his neck and harden his heart even after many rebukes.

- Enter Abigail, a type of the Holy Spirit, who stops David, who in some ways is just as arrogant as the man who seemingly insulted his pride.
- So much so, if David would have actually carried this out in the heat of the battle, it could have led to his own destruction, without remedy.
- Thankfully, he did not remain stiff-necked and as such, he avoided the very fate that would await Nabal in a matter of just ten days, death.

1 Samuel 25:36-38 (36) Now Abigail went to Nabal, and there he was, holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart *was* merry within him, for he *was* very drunk; therefore she told him nothing, little or much, until morning light. (37) So it was, in the morning, when the wine had gone from Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became *like* a stone. (38) Then it happened, *after* about ten days, that the LORD struck Nabal, and he died.

- And so it ends for this rich fool who was so arrogant and antagonistic when it came to everything he owned being his. Well, not any more!
- We don't know if he had a heart attack or a stroke, we do know while Abigail could save him from David's wrath but not God's judgment.
- It's been suggested that the Parable of the Rich Fool that Jesus taught in Luke 12:15-21, may have been directed at the likes of a Nabal.

Luke 12:15-21 Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (16) And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. (17) He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' (18) 'Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. (19) And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." (20) "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' (21) "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

- By way of personal application, I'll bring it to a close with the take away from what I see as the common denominator between all of them.
- More specifically, that of pride on the part of Nabal in 1 Samuel, the rich fool in the parable, and the carnal Christians here in Corinthians.
- Here's the take away, by way, of a question, when God sends an Abigail or a Paul to rebuke me, will I stiffen my neck or humble myself?

I'll leave you with a quote from Roy Hession in his classic writing, "The Calvary Road." Hession writes, "There is a big difference between a snake and a worm, when you attempt to strike at them. The snake rears itself up and hisses and tries to strike back – a true picture of self. But a worm offers no resistance, it allows you to do what you like with it, kick it or squash it under your heel – a picture of true brokenness. And Jesus was willing to become just that for us – a worm and no man. ...I know this to be true in my life and in the lives of many others: The degree to which we are still in bondage to our sin is the degree to which we still act like a snake rather than a worm."